

In 1870, most of Nebraska's population was rural. However, urban living has become the norm. In 2010, about two-thirds of Nebraska residents lived in urban areas, defined as municipalities of 2,500 or more residents. Between 2000 and 2010, 68 of the state's 93 counties lost population. While rural populations dwindle, Nebraska's larger cities and counties continue to grow. Between 2000 and 2010, the population of Douglas County—home of Omaha—increased 11.5 percent, while neighboring Sarpy County grew 29.6 percent.

Nebraska's population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. The most significant growth has occurred in the Latino population, which is now the state's largest minority group. From 2000 to 2010, the state's Latino population increased from 5.5 percent to 9.2 percent, growing at a rate of slightly more than 77 percent. The black population also grew from 3.9 percent to 4.4 percent during that time.

While Nebraska's median age increased from 35.3 in 2000, to 36.2 in 2010—the number of Nebraskans age 65 and older decreased slightly during the same time period, from 13.6 percent in 2000, to 13.5 percent in 2010.

## RECREATION AND PLACES OF INTEREST<sup>33</sup>

### National Areas<sup>34</sup>

Nebraska has two national forest areas with hand-planted trees: the Bessey Ranger District of the Nebraska National Forest in Blaine and Thomas counties, and the Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest in Cherry County. The Pine Ridge Ranger District of the Nebraska National Forest in Dawes and Sioux counties contains native ponderosa pine trees. The U.S. Forest Service also administers the Oglala National Grassland in northwest Nebraska. Within it is Toadstool Geologic Park, a moonscape of eroded badlands containing fossil trackways that are 30 million years old. The Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, an archaeological site containing the remains of more than 600 prehistoric bison, also is located within the grassland.

Agate Fossil Beds National Monument in Sioux County contains animal fossils. Homestead National Monument of America near Beatrice was built on one of the first pieces of land claimed under the U.S. Homestead Act of 1862. Scotts Bluff National Monument near Scottsbluff is an 800-foot bluff that was a landmark for pioneers on the Oregon Trail. Chimney Rock National Historic Site, a 500-foot spire carved by the elements, is near Bayard. It also served as a landmark for Oregon Trail travelers. The Niobrara National Scenic River is a popular canoeing river. The Missouri/Niobrara/Verdigris Creek National Recreational Rivers and the Missouri National Recreational River offer land and water recreation and views of the waterways similar to those the Lewis and Clark expedition saw as they crossed the Great Plains.

<sup>33</sup>Information for this section compiled from the following sources: Nebraska Department of Economic Development; Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; Nebraska Indian Commission; National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior; U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Nebraska State Historical Society.

<sup>34</sup>For more information about the areas in Nebraska administered by the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service, see Pages 103-106 and 149-150.

## State Areas<sup>35</sup>

Nebraska's eight state parks are Eugene T. Mahoney and Platte River in Cass County, Smith Falls in Cherry County, Chadron in Dawes County, Fort Robinson in Dawes and Sioux counties, Indian Cave in Nemaha and Richardson counties, Niobrara in Knox County and Ponca in Dixon County.

Arbor Lodge in Otoe County is one of the state's most popular historical parks. J. Sterling Morton, who founded Arbor Day, built a four-room house in 1855 that was transformed into an elegant 52-room mansion. More than 200 varieties of trees are planted on the estate's grounds.

Other Nebraska historical parks include:

- Ash Hollow (Garden County), a rest stop for Oregon Trail travelers
- Ashfall Fossil Beds (Antelope County), a working paleontological dig of ancient rhinoceroses
- Fort Atkinson (Washington County), the first U.S. military post built west of the Missouri River
- Arthur Bowring Sandhills Ranch (Cherry County), a working Sandhills cattle ranch donated by Nebraska's first female U.S. senator
- Buffalo Bill Ranch (Lincoln County), the home of William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Army scout and showman
- Champion Mill (Chase County), the last water-powered mill to operate in Nebraska
- Fort Hartsuff (Valley County), a restored 1870s military post
- Fort Kearny (Kearney County), an Army frontier outpost to guard the Overland Trail
- Rock Creek Station (Jefferson County), a stop on the Pony Express route where Wild Bill Hickok killed David McCanles

## Other Places of Interest

Thousands of travelers pass through Nebraska each year on highways that follow the Oregon, California and Mormon trails. In some places, ruts from the pioneers' wagon wheels can be seen from the road.

The Fontenelle Forest Nature Center at Bellevue, site of Nebraska's oldest settlement, was established as a trading post by John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company around 1832.

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo has the world's largest indoor rain forest, the world's largest indoor desert, the Kingdoms of the Seas aquarium, a nocturnal exhibit and indoor swamp, and an IMAX theater. The zoo also operates a conservation park and wildlife safari near Ashland. The Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History has the world's largest diorama of whooping cranes and Sandhill cranes in the world, a planetarium and the Lied Super Screen Theatre.

The State Capitol in Lincoln is considered an outstanding example of modern architecture.

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<sup>35</sup> For more information on state areas, see Page 639.

Willa Cather, Nebraska's most famous writer, is honored with a pioneer memorial at Red Cloud.

Lake McConaughy, Nebraska's largest lake, is a popular recreational area. Campers and hikers visit the rugged Pine Ridge area in northwestern Nebraska. Other scenic spots are found along the Platte, Niobrara, Big Blue, Loup, Republican, Dismal and Missouri rivers. Fishing, hunting, horse racing and rodeos also are popular pastimes in Nebraska.

## Special Events

One of the state's largest events is Nebraskaland Days. The weeklong celebration, which features parades, an old-time Wild West show and a rodeo, is held each June in North Platte. Other rodeos include the Burwell Rodeo and Omaha's Ak-Sar-Ben (Nebraska spelled backwards) River City Rodeo and Stock Show. The Nebraska State Fair is held in late August and early September.

Many of the state's ethnic groups hold annual festivals that feature native costumes, dances and foods. Among the most popular events are Germanfest in Syracuse, the Swedish Festival in Stromsburg, the Danish Festival in Dannebrog and the National Czech Festival in Wilber. Many people attend powwows of the Ponca Tribe in Niobrara, the Omaha Tribe in Macy, the Santee Sioux Tribe in Niobrara and the Winnebago Tribe in Winnebago. Other events include Oregon Trail Days in Gering, Sandhill Crane Migration Days and Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island and Kool-Aid Days in Hastings.



The Lied Jungle at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo

## Husker Football<sup>36</sup>



For 40 years, the University of Nebraska has ranked among the most dominant powers in college football. Since Coach Bob Devaney arrived in 1962, the Cornhuskers have become one of the most recognizable symbols of the state.

Since winning its first game on Nov. 27, 1890, the Nebraska football program has amassed more than 830 victories. Since 1970, Nebraska has won five national championships. Under the direction of Coach Tom Osborne, the Huskers posted the best five-year record in NCAA football history — 60-3 from 1993 to 1997, including three unbeaten and untied seasons.

Husker football fans are widely known as some of the most devoted fans in sports. Starting on Nov. 3, 1962, there have been 340 consecutive sellouts of Memorial Stadium — an NCAA record.

Besides football, Nebraska has fielded national championship teams in men's gymnastics, volleyball and women's indoor track and bowling. With several College World Series appearances, most recently in 2005, both the baseball and softball programs have excelled at a national level. The men's track, women's gymnastics, wrestling and rifle teams have all earned top-10 finishes at the national championships in recent years.

For more information, visit the Web site —[www.huskers.com](http://www.huskers.com).

<sup>36</sup> Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Sports Information Office. Photo courtesy of University of Nebraska Alumni Association.



### Special Attractions in Nebraska

Nebraska's special attractions include (clockwise, from top left) Ashfall State Historical Park near Royal, Chimney Rock National Historic Site near Bayard, American Indian dancing demonstrations and the historic Meriwether Lewis dredge near Brownville.

Attendance at Selected Nebraska Attractions, 2013<sup>37</sup>

Attraction	Location	Attendance <sup>38</sup>
Arbor Day Farm.....	Nebraska City.....	37,546
Arbor Lodge State Historical Park and Arboretum.....	Nebraska City.....	109,000
Ash Hollow State Historical Park.....	Lewellen.....	11,600
Beatrice Big Blue Water Park.....	Beatrice.....	21,521
Bess Streeter Aldrich House and Museum.....	Elmwood.....	550
Bluestem State Recreation Area.....	Sprague.....	83,327
Bowring Sandhills Ranch State Historical Park, Arthur.....	Merriman.....	1,280
Box Butte Reservoir State Recreation Area.....	Hemingford.....	19,950
Branched Oak State Recreation Area.....	Raymond.....	1,160,158
Bridgeport State Recreation Area.....	Bridgeport.....	35,032
Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park and Recreation Area.....	North Platte.....	45,161
Burt County Museum.....	Tekamah.....	2,109
Calamus Reservoir State Recreation Area.....	Burwell.....	598,250
Carhenge.....	Alliance.....	80,000
Cass County Historical Society Museum.....	Plattsmouth.....	2,400
Chadron State Park.....	Chadron.....	380,100
Children's Museum, Omaha.....	Omaha.....	282,287
Conestoga State Recreation Area.....	Denton.....	140,820
Dawes County Historical Society Museum.....	Chadron.....	3,047
Dead Timber State Recreation Area.....	Scribner.....	8,000
Durham Museum.....	Omaha.....	204,787
Edgerton Explorit Center.....	Aurora.....	20,150
Enders Reservoir State Recreation Area.....	Enders.....	54,165
Fort Atkinson State Historical Park.....	Fort Calhoun.....	27,585
Fort Hartsuff State Historical Park.....	Burwell.....	6,547
Fort Kearny State Historical Park.....	Kearney.....	35,605
Fort Kearny State Recreation Area.....	Kearney.....	78,900
Fort Robinson State Park.....	Crawford.....	386,825
Fremont Lakes State Recreation Area.....	Fremont.....	874,800
Front Street and Cowboy Museum.....	Ogallala.....	45,307
Great Platte River Road Archway.....	Kearney.....	49,851
Gothenburg Historical Museum.....	Gothenburg.....	1,685
Henry Doorly Zoo.....	Omaha.....	1,608,349
Homestead National Monument of America.....	Beatrice.....	70,420
Indian Cave State Park.....	Shubert.....	241,100
Johnson Lake State Recreation Area.....	Lexington.....	124,513
Joslyn Art Museum.....	Omaha.....	146,380
Knight Museum and Sandhills Center.....	Alliance.....	22,696
Lake Maloney State Recreation Area.....	North Platte.....	191,000
Lake McConaughy/Lake Ogallala State Recreation Areas.....	Ogallala.....	1,160,713
Lake Minatare State Recreation Area.....	Minatare.....	147,600
Lake Wanahoo State Recreation Area.....	Wahoo.....	505,000
Lauritzen Gardens and Kenefick Park.....	Omaha.....	177,788
Lee G. Simmons Conservation Park and Wildlife Safari.....	Ashland.....	114,296
Lewis and Clark Campsite.....	Niobrara.....	130,560
Lewis and Clark Lake State Recreation Area.....	Crofton.....	260,590
Lewis and Clark Visitor Center.....	Crofton.....	28,000
Louisville Lakes State Recreation Area.....	Louisville.....	564,800
Mahoney State Park, Eugene T.....	Ashland.....	113,510
Medicine Creek State Recreation Area.....	Cambridge.....	24,197
Merritt Reservoir State Recreation Area.....	Valentine.....	47,000
Metropolitan Community College Arboretum.....	Omaha.....	50,000
Missouri River Basin Lewis & Clark Interpretive Trail/Visitor Center.....	Nebraska City.....	11,069
Mormon Island State Recreation Area.....	Grand Island.....	50,150
Mormon Trail Center.....	Omaha.....	57,726
Museum of Nebraska Art.....	Kearney.....	18,533
Nebraska History Museum.....	Lincoln.....	27,588
Niobrara National Scenic River.....	Valentine.....	71,876
Niobrara State Park.....	Niobrara.....	73,453
Oliver Reservoir State Recreation Area.....	Kimball.....	2,415
Orpheum Theater.....	Omaha.....	370,000

<sup>37</sup> Attractions selected include state historical sites, state parks, state historical parks, federal areas and non-commercial attractions reporting annual attendance of 20,000 or higher. Other attractions were selected based on their historical or geographical significance.

<sup>38</sup> Source: Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Figures represent attendance reported by the attractions themselves for all of 2013.



## Attendance at Selected Nebraska Attractions, 2013 (Cont'd.)

Attraction	Location	Attendance
Pawnee State Recreation Area.....	Lincoln.....	369,719
Platte County Historical Society Museum.....	Columbus.....	1,547
Platte River State Park.....	Louisville.....	788,610
Ponca State Park.....	Ponca.....	782,430
Red Willow State Recreation Area.....	McCook.....	39,005
Riverside Discovery Center.....	Scottsbluff.....	32,892
Rock Creek State Station Historical Park and Recreation Area.....	Fairbury.....	28,815
Saunders County Historical Museum.....	Wahoo.....	7,130
Sherman Reservoir State Recreation Area.....	Loup City.....	73,748
Smith Falls State Park.....	Valentine.....	40,368
Stagecoach State Recreation Area.....	Hickman.....	91,762
Star City Shores.....	Lincoln.....	52,307
State Capitol, Nebraska.....	Lincoln.....	85,910
Strategic Air and Space Museum.....	Ashland.....	109,393
Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer.....	Grand Island.....	67,879
Summit Lake State Recreation Area.....	Tekamah.....	129,671
Sutherland State Recreation Area.....	Sutherland.....	56,550
Swanson Reservoir State Recreation Area.....	Trenton.....	99,660
Two Rivers State Recreation Area.....	Venice.....	356,300
Union Orchard.....	Union.....	90,000
University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History.....	Lincoln.....	75,369
Victoria Springs State Recreation Area.....	Anselmo.....	21,800
Wagon Train State Recreation Area.....	Hickman.....	238,484
Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area.....	Gering.....	24,926
Willa Cather State Historic Site.....	Red Cloud.....	7,000
Willow Creek State Recreation Area.....	Pierce.....	211,950
Windmill State Recreation Area.....	Gibbon.....	48,150